

THE STATE WELLNESS CONNECTION

STATE HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN

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WINTER EXERCISE ROUTINES KEY

By Alan Esleman, M.D.
Kaiser Permanente

Fall and winter can be difficult times if you are trying to get regular exercise and to manage your weight.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, the average American puts on several pounds.

Part of this weight gain is because late fall and mid-winter are filled with all kinds of holiday feasts and parties. Then there is all the food that coworkers share with the office.

Another reason for the weight gain is that people tend to relax on their exercise programs when the days get shorter.

This time of year, we wake up in the dark, head off to work, and get back home after sunset.

It is hard to get motivated to go out for a walk, a run, or a bike ride when it is cold and dark. More likely we will choose snacks, the couch, and TV.

Successful exercisers know about the problems of short days and

plan accordingly. Here are a few tips to keep you exercising through the fall and winter.

Consider shifting the time that you usually exercise.

If you have exercise facilities at your workplace, use them during your lunch break to get in a half-hour of walking on a treadmill or working out with an exercise machine.

If you don't have exercise facilities at work, see if there's a health club or a "Y" nearby. Some

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Eating right can cut your cancer risk... see page 3
- Learn how to save on your prescription drug bill and still get the medicines you need... see page 3

By Kim McCurdy,
UnitedHealthCare

Keeping your heart strong and healthy is not complicated—but it does take a little effort. Taking care of your heart can pay off in good health dividends for years to come.

♥ Visit your doctor.

Have regular checkups including blood pressure and cholesterol level readings, as appropriate for you. Talk with your doctor about any risk factors including illnesses, ongoing health

conditions and family medical history. If you have health concerns such as diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol, carefully follow your doctor's instructions and keep

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KEEP YOUR HEART HEALTHY

FDA COMMENTS ON PAIN MEDICINES

By Valerie Carpenter
Cigna

On December 16, 2004, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) informed the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Pfizer, Inc., that they stopped a clinical trial of Celebrex due to an increased risk of cardiovascular events.

The FDA warned of clotting problems for patients who recently had coronary artery bypass graft surgery.

The FDA asked Pfizer to stop its direct-to-consumer advertising and modify its marketing to doctors. The FDA advised physicians to determine if continued use is appropriate for

individual patients and use the lowest effective dose of Celebrex.

Q. What should patients currently taking Celebrex do?

A. Any questions or decisions about which drug product to take should be directed to your physician who will base his/her decisions on your specific treatment needs.

Q. Are there other COX-2 selective NSAIDs on the market?

A. Bextra® (valdecoxib) is in the category, however, a November warning advises of an increased

risk for a serious skin reaction known as Stevens-Johnson syndrome.

Vioxx® (rofecoxib), another COX-2 selective NSAID, was withdrawn from sale in September due to an increased risk of serious cardiovascular events, including heart attacks and strokes.

Please visit the FDA website:
<http://www.fda.gov> for additional information

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him or her informed of any symptoms or changes.

♥ **Kick the smoking habit.** Do not put it off any longer. Many serious health risks are associated with smoking, including heart disease and elevated blood pressure. Consider a smoking cessation program or talk with your doctor about aids such as nicotine gum or patches. Counseling or a support group also may be helpful. Quitting smoking may not be easy, but your health—and life—depend on it.

♥ **Fuel up with good food.** Eat foods that are low in fat, cholesterol and sodium. But, remember that low in fat does not always mean low in calories, so read nutrition labels carefully. A

diet high in fiber can lower cholesterol, so be sure to include foods such as whole grains and beans in your diet. Fruits and vegetables also can supply fiber, as well as many heart-healthy vitamins and minerals. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

♥ Keep your body moving.

Exercise is important for a healthy heart—but that does not mean you need to be a marathon runner. Aerobic exercise such as walking, bicycling or swimming is great for your heart. Choose an activity that is a good match to your fitness

level and be sure to start slowly. Gradually work up to five days a week, 30 minutes a day. Before

beginning any exercise or sports program, talk with your doctor.

♥ **Learn to manage stress and anger.** Keeping life on an even keel is not always possible.

However, you can make changes to the way you react to

life's daily challenges. Use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, gentle stretching or meditation. Look at your daily and long-term priorities. Are your expectations realistic? Do your best each day and let the rest go. Eating well and exercising can help make stress management easier. Make time for good health and good relationships—it will do your heart good.

For more information contact your provider.

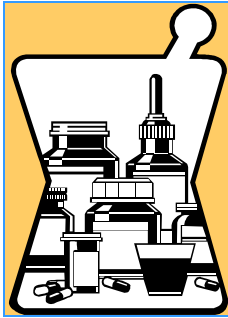
"Do your best each day and let the rest go."



IT'S TIME TO RETHINK GENERICS AND SAVE \$\$\$\$\$\$

By Ginny Perlis,
Express Scripts, Inc.

Let's face it. Many of us grew up with the idea that the word "generic" means second-rate or low quality. So what about generic drugs? Many people still think generic prescription drugs just are not as good as brand-name drugs.



But the truth is millions of people today save money by choosing generic drugs. And what is more, they do not sacrifice quality. The generic medications they take are just as safe and effective as more expensive brand-name drugs.

A generic drug contains the same active ingredients in the same dosage forms and strengths as the brand-name drug.

Manufacturers do add small amounts of inactive ingredients to add flavor or change the color. As a result, the generic equivalents often

look different but deliver the same quality and effectiveness as that of the brand-name drug.

To be sure of this, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must approve generic drugs before they are marketed in the United States.

The FDA requires generics to contain the same active ingredients and be absorbed and used in the body in the same way as brand-name drugs. These requirements assure that generic drugs are safe and effective.

High price does not always

guarantee greater quality. Generics cost less than

brand-name drugs because drug manufacturers must spend large sums of money on research, development, and marketing of brand-name drugs. These costs are built into the price you pay for the drug. Manufacturers of generic equivalents have much lower costs, and they pass the savings

"...value is causing more people to choose generic medications."

on to the consumer.

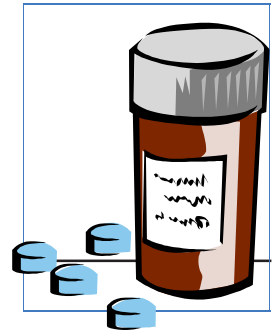
Wise consumers want to get the best value for their money. Value is what is causing more people to choose generic medications. Already over 40% of all medications dispensed annually are generic drugs, and the availability of generic drugs is constantly expanding. By 2006, many

of the best-selling, most widely prescribed brand-name drugs will be available as generics.

It is your choice. When you get a prescription, find out whether a generic drug is available and whether it is appropriate for you.

Ask your doctor:

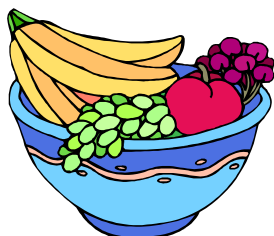
- 1) Is there a generic drug that is appropriate for my condition?
- 2) Are there any potential side effects if I change medications?



YOUR MOM WAS RIGHT! EAT YOUR VEGETABLES!

Janalyn D. Kelly
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Georgia

Fruits and vegetables are clearly an important part of a healthy diet and provide naturally occurring antioxidants that often work in conjunction with other nutrients.



People may benefit from eating more of them, but variety is just as important as quantity.

No single fruit or vegetable provides all of the nutrients needed to be healthy.

The key lies in eating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables.

The Harvard School of Public Health offers some basic tips about consuming more fruits and vegetables:

- ♥ Gradually increase the amount of fruits and vegetables you eat daily. Some experts suggest trying to eat more than the recommended five servings.

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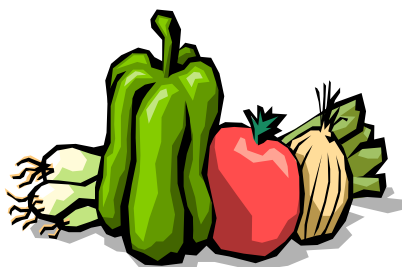
YOUR MOM WAS RIGHT...*continued from page 3*

♥ Choose a variety of different fruits and vegetables. It is easy to get into a rut when it comes to the foods you eat.

Break out and try a wider variety, but be sure to include dark-green, leafy vegetables; yellow, orange, and red fruits and vegetables, tomatoes and citrus fruits.

Although some studies about antioxidant supplementation may seem promising, it is still not clear if antioxidant

supplementation is safe in the long run. Talk to your doctor if you have questions or concerns about taking supplements.



For now, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) suggests that you are better off consuming antioxidants in their natural form, by eating fresh fruits and vegetables than by taking a pill.

“You cannot get around it; we should be spending our money in the produce department, not the vitamin aisles,” states Melanie Polk, director of Nutrition Education at the AICR.

WINTER EXERCISE ROUTINES KEY... *continued from page 1*

employers may even subsidize your membership.

Consider indoor exercises. Many communities sponsor evening volleyball and basketball games. Dancing - folk, square, and ballroom - is great exercise.

There is always swimming indoors in a heated pool. Or, how about giving yoga a try?

Many of these activities take place at local schools or churches. You can often obtain a schedule from your local school district's adult education department.

Consider buying exercise equipment—and if you already own it, consider using it! Stationary bicycles, steppers,



cross-country ski machines, elliptical trainers, and treadmills can provide excellent aerobic exercise, and you don't even have to leave the comfort of your home.

Unfortunately, in most homes, these machines sit idle, or are used as clothes racks.

There are lots of previously owned exercise equipment for sale, usually at a fraction of the original price.

But be careful when purchasing used equipment; be sure it is something you will use and it is safe.

If you have any doubts, ask a knowledgeable friend who can advise you. Physical therapists are also good sources of information about exercise equipment.

Do not try to cram all of your exercise into the weekend. That is a good way to get a sports injury.

Spread your exercise over the entire week instead of trying to be a weekend warrior.



Whatever form of exercise appeals to you, the most important thing is to make a plan that will help you get regular workouts throughout the fall and winter.

When spring arrives, you'll be fit and ready for your favorite outdoor pursuits.

... What is “Choice” Option

The Choice Option for HMO or PPO allows members to nominate an out-of-network provider for their health care services and to receive services with that provider at the in-network rate.

Members selecting Choice pay a higher premium for this flexibility.

The nominated out-of-network provider must be licensed and located in the State of Georgia.

The non-network provider must accept the member’s nomination, be approved by the HMO or PPO network administrator and be willing to accept the network fees and conditions.

Under the PPO Choice Option, if the Network Administrator does not approve the provider, then all routine medical services from the non-network provider will be covered at the lower out-of-network benefit level.

Under the HMO Choice Option, if the Network Administrator does not approve the provider, all medical services from the non-participating provider will NOT be covered.

The Choice Option is not available for members to nominate providers outside the State of Georgia. SHBP rules do not permit a member to change options when a nominated provider or the HMO or PPO network administrator rejects a non-network provider nomination.



STATE HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN

USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

www.dch.state.ga.us ...for all State Health Benefit Plan Information

800-483-6983 or
404-233-4479 ...for PPO and Indemnity Specific Information
www.healthygeorgia.com

www.bcbsga.com ...for BlueChoice HMO Information
800-464-1367

www.cigna.com ...for Cigna HMO Information
800-244-6224

www.kaiserpermanente.org ...for Kaiser Permanente HMO Information
800-611-1811

www.provider.uhc.com/gdch ...for United HealthCare HMO Information
866-527-9599